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ABSTRACT

The schools, bombarded by several forces both externally and internally, have become enmeshed in an accountability syndrome. The school principal, as usual, is right in the middle and is being asked with greater frequency to become accountable for his administrative performance. In order to cope with this situation, the principal must take the initiative and respond to the syndrome. A beginning for the principal could well rest in the realm of proficiency in the development, implementation, and evaluation of performance objectives. Three steps toward achieving adroitness in this area are (1) the establishment of a strong frame of reference for the development of performance objectives, (2) the development of the ability to create a viable hierarchy of administrative task areas in which to devote time and energy, and (3) the acquisition of skill in applying the techniques of analyzing administrative performance.
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THE PERFORMANCE OF PRINCIPALS IN THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYNDROME

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THE PERFORMANCE OF PRINCIPALS IN THE ACCOUNTABILITY SYNDROME

Introduction

What has brought about the accountability syndrome engulfing the educator at all levels and in all capacities? There is little doubt that accountability has been the key word in the early seventies and from all indications will continue to receive increased importance. The concept of accountability in education has been expanded recently from connotations of fiscal responsibility to those relating to student achievement in cognitive and affective domains, curricular programming, and teaching and administrative performance among others. It is in the latter realm, administrative performance, where much new ground is being broken, that concerted efforts are being directed to how administrators might undergo formal evaluations and thus be classified in the accountability spectrum. This obviously is an extension of the scrutiny from a variety of groups of the typical line officers, principals and superintendents, who have always undergone intensive evaluations of an informal nature. Such groups include parents, students, teachers, custodians, school board members and other interested publics from the community in which the administrator performs. Indeed, Drucker (1968) sees the school administrator becoming extremely visible to individuals and community groups.

Surface Conditions

Of course, visibility automatically engenders evaluation which is part of the accountability syndrome. But what are some specific contributory factors? An obvious one relates to the tight economic conditions nationally. Taxpaying patrons are insisting on procedures to reflect an optimum cost-benefit for school administrative functions. Students by their insistence on relevance project yet another facet in asking the administrator to account for his effectiveness in program development and implementation.

With the advent of master contracts for teaching groups and the clauses relating to evaluation of teachers, these same teachers are expressing the opinion that if they are to be evaluated on a formal basis so too should the principal. And again, nationally, demands for more equality of education among schools both within and across school districts have implied systematic evaluation of the chief executive officer of each school is certainly needed. These are but some of the factors which have been contributing to the development of formal evaluative procedures being adopted by many school systems for their administrators. And in a very short period of time almost all of the school systems throughout the country will be geared for utilizing accountability schemes which will include formal evaluations of their school administrators. It appears to be inevitable!

Submerged Conditions

All of the above relate to surfaced conditions contributory to the accountability syndrome. But there are many other conditions which are not so readily apparent. Two of the more fundamental concepts that

could help explain how we have arrived at our current situation will be explored. First, there is the proverbial expansion of knowledge and secondly the essence of our so-called "cultural gap". Looking at these two fundamental notions in the following paragraphs neither conceptualization is purported to be scientifically accurate. Only gross approximations are suggested to capture the thrust of the ideas.

In most of the educational oratory of the past two decades we have been bombarded with the standard cliché alluded to as the "knowledge explosion". I believe this might become more meaningful if we could diagram the concept as follows:

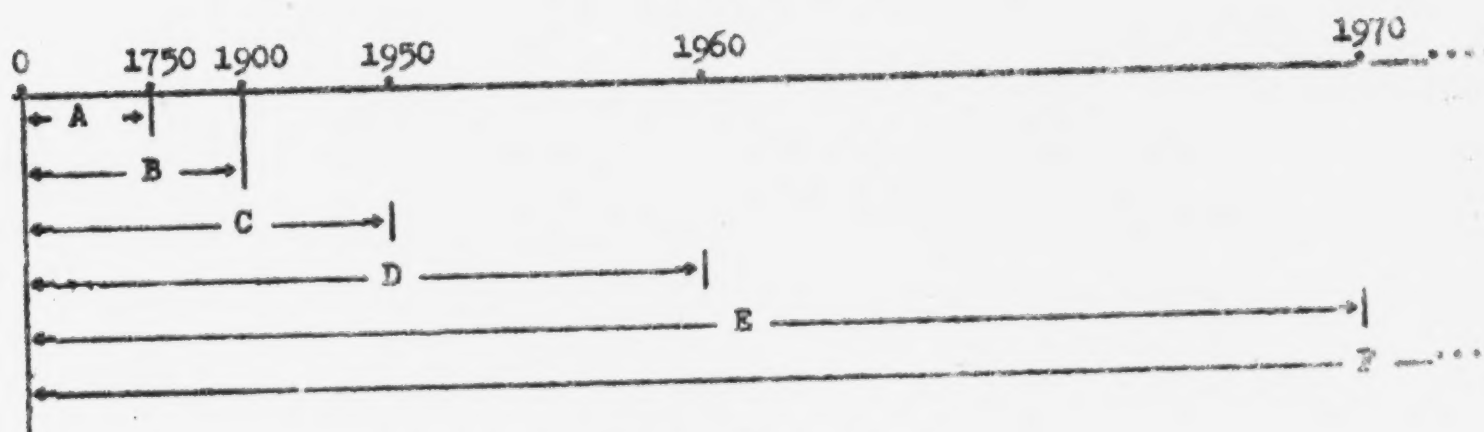


Figure I

KNOWLEDGE EXPANSION OVER TIME.

The important message in Figure I is the visualization of the geometric progression in the rate of knowledge that has accumulated over time. The amount of knowledge accrued from the beginning of time to the year 1750 is represented by A. It can be seen that B denotes the doubling of our knowledge base by 1900. The increments in our century and particularly since 1950 are truly astounding if the conceptualization is accurate as suggested by some experts in this field.

In any case, we can readily see the impact on our schools as they try to transmit the pyramiding amounts of cognitive information. Small wonder that specialization has been the only feasible route for students of any given discipline. Educators limited by time, personnel facilities and money have had to be selective in sorting out which slice of the cognitive pie to carve out and consume.

As if this was not bad enough, we are now extremely concerned with the affective domain. That is, not only is it important "to know", in a cognitive sense, but it is imperative in our current thinking to be competent in dealing with how "we feel" about what we know. Some have suggested a discrepancy between the rates of growth of these two concepts has created a gap. Herein lies the second fundamental concern which may have been conceptualized a decade ago by Hodgkinson (1962) when he described, in spatial terms, the increasing gap (cultural lag as he describes it) between the technical culture and the value culture:

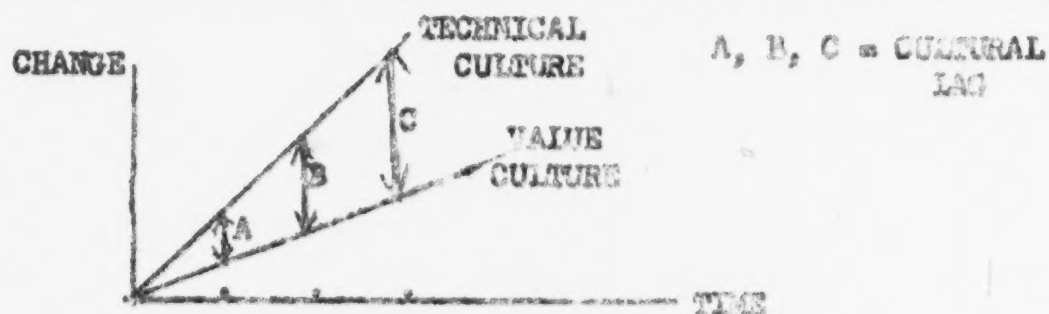


Figure II
DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL LAG OVER TIME

Hodgkinson defines the technical culture as being concerned with the "techniques and devices used by the members of society to perform tasks which are necessary for the continued existence of society." Here, knowledge in knowing how to produce goods, materials, foodstuffs and the like would constitute a considerable part of the technical culture. On the other hand the value culture consists of "the values, goals and behavioral cues which have to do with morality, religiosity and purpose." Thus, the function of this culture relates in part to how people feel about the things they know and the things they do. As suggested by the figure the technical culture has outstripped the value culture. With such a gap occurring, young people are increasingly expressing concern about value systems of the generations immediately prior to their own. Inherent in this concern are implications for educators as they work with young people in our school system. An example would be our knowledge of how to produce nuclear energy. Do we use the knowledge to produce nuclear warheads to give us the political club to keep our ideological adversaries at bay? Or do we use nuclear energy to provide power plants which aid needy people in securing more of the conveniences of modern life? Where are our values?

Relevancy For the Principalship

Against this backdrop of surfaced conditions -- economic status of schools, teacher militancy, student unrest and the like -- and the two more submerged notions of knowledge expansion and cultural lag, it is small wonder that a full-blown accountability syndrome has developed in education. Let's now tease out of this total condition our original concern of administrative performance. It was suggested earlier that this would indeed be increasingly put on the line and formal evaluation

procedures will be instituted to measure the performance of administrators.

So what can secondary school principals do at this time? Probably the most important thing is to be active in the process of developing accountability schemes for the secondary school principalship. The types of principal evaluation formats will be numerous and fittingly adapted in large measure to local conditions. Whatever the scheme is, however, the principal must be highly involved and have considerable input for who knows better than the principal himself what criteria should be utilized in the determination of effective administrative performance? Of course, the key issue here is the establishment of the criteria or basis for judgment of performance. This leads ultimately to the development of performance objectives. So in responding to the accountability syndrome the secondary school principal should become adept not only with the development but also the implementation and evaluation of performance objectives. Therefore, it is suggested that the principal should:

1. Establish a strong frame of reference for the development of performance objectives.
2. Become familiar with the hierarchy of administrative task areas which need priorities in implementation of performance objectives.
3. Become skilled with the techniques of analyzing administrative performance.

Frame of Reference

A brief commentary on each of the above is in order. First, in the establishment of a sound frame of reference, an attempt has been made to offer a rationale for a skill-strategy matrix utilizing the skills suggested by Katz (1955) on the vertical part of the proposition and strategies identified by Nelson (1969) on the horizontal in the following manner:

		STRATEGIES			
		Control	Implementative	Evaluative	Developmentive
SKILLS	Technical	A	B	C	D
	Human	E	F	G	H
	Conceptual	I	J	K	L

Figure III

SKILL-STRATEGY MATRIX FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The basic principle of skillfulness, according to Katz, is the ability to put knowledge into effective action. He categorized skills as being technical, human and conceptual. Technical skills involve an understanding of things, methods and procedures and the ability to work with them. Human skills relate to one's capacity to understand people and the ability to work with them and evolve them into an effective team. Conceptual skills are those concerned with an understanding of the organization as a whole; the ability to recognize interdependence of roles and to perceive significant elements of the climate in appropriate context.

Nelson identified four strategies with which the administrator is confronted. Control strategy is the management activities that one undertakes to regulate conduct of program, events and performances through imposing restraint, directing movement, granting authorization or otherwise overseeing affairs that are part of the organizational function. Implementative strategy refers to the direction of one's effort toward doing those things

which help expedite, fulfill, and complete programs, events and performances that serve to complement and supplement on-going operations in the organization. Evaluative strategy is the engagement in analysis and assessment of activities designed to appraise goals and procedures, rates of progress, distinctions in meanings, and otherwise ascertain validity of expression and results of experiences in programs, events and performances. Developmentive strategy is the exercise of one's creative talent and imagination in generating ideas, formulating propositions, and planning approaches which extend insights, expand possibilities and abstract relational processes that may result in improved programs, events and performances.

Barrilleaux (1972) indicated another plan for measuring the development of projected behaviors in school administration which he used with twenty-nine administrative interns in the school principalship. The behavioral objectives in Barrilleaux's scheme cluster about four key cyclic processes. They were diagnostic, prescriptive, implementative, and evaluative. There are, of course, many other ways of establishing a frame of reference for the development of performance objectives but these two are certainly illustrative and worthy of consideration.

Establishing Meaningful Task Areas

The second major consideration for developing performance objectives relates to the identification of task areas and the establishment of priority levels for pursuing each. Perhaps no better place to start could be found than in the detailed analysis of the task areas and specific principal behaviors outlined in the NASSP-Danforth Foundation Model Schools Project. Trump and Georgiades (1971) outline the progress of schools and principals in the project, and Trump (1972) again in the theme of humanizing schools

elaborates on specific task areas where issues must be resolved.

Another excellent source to utilize in the establishment of task area priorities is the NCPRA project in taxonomy identifications. Griffith (1966) enumerated three major categories of expressive, instrumental and routine task areas. In the first two of these, further breakdowns were given in areas of policy setting, normative and social structures. But it was probably in the third area where the taxonomy could be of greatest value. For here the specifics needed for implementation of performance objectives are more nearly approached. For example, there are six broad categories which are broken down into several elements which can give the principals some practical handles with which to operate. The six categories are programming functions in instruction and curriculum, staff personnel, pupil personnel, finance and business management, school plant and services and school-community relations. It is not my purpose to deal in depth with these task areas but only to identify two very promising sources of task classification systems for the secondary school principal.

Analyzing Performance Objectives

After the development and implementation of performance objectives for the school principal it is incumbent on all concerned to develop an evaluation scheme. An obvious need for this is to be able to respond effectively to the accountability syndrome, which has developed chiefly from the factors and publics enumerated earlier. Of equal and probably more importance is the opportunity it provides to refine, modify and re-cycle, if you will, our performance objectives in order to maintain viability and keep ahead of the crowd so that our status positions of leadership are equalled by our functional positions of leadership.

With such an admonition in mind, there probably is no better single source for analyzing performance than Mager and Pipe (1970). It is succinctly written and contains a flow diagram which could well be adapted to describing the steps of a procedure one might follow in analyzing performance objectives of a school principal. Built into the system is the accommodation of determining skill deficiencies which may be branched into a re-training situation or other alternatives depending upon the basic tried of the job, the setting, and the principal. Another scheme with which the writer and some of his colleagues are just beginning to work is in the area of matrix development for classifying the administrative performance of the school principal. Observers could take a matrix as in Figure III and mark the frequency with which the principal performs a task in any of the cells A through L. There are obvious limitations since the cells overlap with each other to some extent. This would be particularly true for some task areas. Nevertheless, there could well be patterns of behavior which would emerge to give insight into various skill-strategy combinations where principals place their priorities. To illustrate, in Figure IV, one could check out the validity of the recurring notion that practitioners spend far too much time in manipulating task areas in Cells A and B as opposed to Cells K and L. In the former case, controlling and implementing technical affairs of the school are emphasized while K and L relate to such things as evaluating the totality of the school's organization and developing approaches that may result in improved programs, events, and performances.

Summary

The schools being bombarded by several forces both externally and internally have become enmeshed in an accountability syndrome. The school principal, as usual, is right in the middle and is being asked with greater frequency to become accountable for his administrative performance.

In order to cope with this, the principal must take the initiative and respond to the syndrome. A beginning for the principal could well rest in the realm of proficiency in the development, implementation and evaluation of performance objectives. Three steps to achieving adroitness in this area are (1) establishment of a strong frame of reference for the development of performance objectives; (2) development of the ability to create a viable hierarchy of administrative task areas in which to devote time and energy and (3) acquisition of skill in applying the techniques of analyzing administrative performance.

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